

Chapter Twenty-Two

The Hebrew Sentence

Vocabulary

אָבָה	to be willing	הָרַס	to break down, destroy
אָז	then	חַק	statute (f)
אֱמוּנָה	faithfulness, fidelity (f)	חָגַר	to bind, be girded
אָמֵץ	to be strong, firm, bold	יֵשׁ	there is, there are
אָפָה	to bake	לַיְלָה	night (m)
אָרַךְ	to prolong	לְשׁוֹן	tongue (m)
אָשַׁם	to commit a wrong, be guilty	מָוֶת	death (m)
בָּאֵר	well (f)	עֵץ	tree (m)
בְּכוֹר	first-born, oldest	עָרֵב	evening (m)
דְּבַשׁ	honey (m)	פְּרִי	fruit (m)

Syntax of the Hebrew sentence

The normal word order for Hebrew is verb-subject-object.

וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְרָקִיעַ שָׁמַיִם

“And God called the firmament heaven.” (Gen. 1:8a)

Exceptions to word order

The verb may be preceded by an adverb, pronoun, or particle.

1. The verb may be preceded by an adverb, a negative particle, or other modifiers.

עַתָּה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי-גָדוֹל יְהוָה מִכָּל-לְאֵלִים

“Now I know that Yahweh is greater than all gods.” (Ex. 18:11a)

- The verb may be preceded by an expression that provides context with the preceding clause or verse.

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ

“**In the beginning**, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1)

- The verb may be preceded by the interjection הִנֵּה “behold.”

הִן גִּרְשִׁית אֹתִי הַיּוֹם מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה

Behold, you have driven me out this day from the face of the earth (Gen. 4:14a)

- The verb may be preceded by an independent personal pronoun to express emphasis.

וְאַתֶּם תְּהִיוּ-לִי מִמְּלֶכֶת כֹּהֲנִים

“**And you** will be to me a kingdom of priests.” (Ex. 19:6)

Verb Coordinate Conjunction Relationship

When two or more verbs are placed within a clause with a vav (ו) conjunction they form a coordinate relationship. The verb that stands first in the sequence functions as the governing verb that determines both the time and mode of the verbs linked to it.¹

- Coordinate relationship involving a perfect as the governing verb.
 - Perfect + Perfect sequence.* The two verbs are perfect so the resulting meaning is unchanged.

דָּבַר שְׁלַח אֲדֹנָי בַּיַּעֲקֹב וַנִּפֹּל בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל

“The Lord **sent** a word against Jacob, **and it has fallen** on Israel”

(Isa 9:7, English 9:8)

- Perfect + Imperfect sequence.* This construction is called the true narrative sequence. The vav consecutive is attached to the imperfect and is translated as a past tense indicative verb. “It may describe an action resulting from a previous action (consequence) or an action subsequent to a previous action (sequence).”²

זָכַר וַיִּגְבַּהּ בָּרָאם וַיִּבְרָךְ אֹתָם וַיִּקְרָא אֶת-שְׁמֵם אֲרָם

¹ Page Kelley, *Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids:Eerdmans, 1992), p. 210

² *ibid*

“Male and female **He created** them, **and He blessed** them and He named them mankind.” (Gen. 5:2)

2. Relationships involving the imperfect as the governing verb.

- a. *Imperfect + Imperfect sequence.* The conjunction used in this sequence will be the ordinary form of the vav conjunction. The second verb in this sequence naturally expresses the outcome or purpose of the action of the first verb.

וַיְבָרֶכֶדְּיְהוָה וַיְשַׁמְרֶדְּךָ

“May the LORD bless you, **and may he keep you.**” (Num. 6:24)

- b. *Imperfect + Perfect sequence.* The conjunction used in this sequence is to be translated as a normal imperfect in both places.

- i) *Indicative Imperfect + Perfect Sequence.*

הוּא מְלַאֲכֹו לְפָנֶיךָ וְלִקְחָתָּ אִשָּׁה לְבְנִי מִשָּׁם

He will send His angel before you, **and you will take** a wife for my son from there (Gen. 24:7)

- ii) *Jussive Imperfect + Perfect Sequence.* The jussive is the second or third person imperfect verb used to express a wish, desire, or command. The conjunction used in this sequence is to be translated as a normal jussive in both places.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי מֵאֵרַת בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַיּוֹם וּבֵין הַלַּיְלָה וְהָיוּ לְאֹתוֹת וּלְמוֹעֲדִים וּלְיָמִים וְשָׁנִים
Then God said, “**Let there be** lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; **and let them be** for signs and seasons, and for days and years.” (Gen. 1:14)

- iii) *Cohortative Imperfect + Perfect Sequence.* The cohortative is the first person imperfect verb used to express the speaker’s desire to perform an action and sometimes called the first person imperative. The conjunction used in this sequence is to be translated as a normal cohortative in both places.

וַאֲנִיד לָהֶם אֶת־יַד אֱלֹהֵי אֲשֶׁר־הִיא טוֹבָה עָלַי וְאֶת־דְּבַר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר אָמַר־לִי וַיֹּאמְרוּ נָקוּם וּבְנִינוּ וַיַּחֲזִקוּ יְהִיֵּם לְטוֹבָה

And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king’s words that he had spoken to me. So they said, “**Let us rise up and build.**” Then they set their hands to this good work. (Neh. 2:18)

- iv) *Subjunctive Imperfect + Perfect Sequence.* The conjunction used in this sequence is to be translated as a normal subjunctive in both places.

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים הֵן הָאָדָם הַזֶּה כְּאֶחָד מִמֶּנּוּ לְדַעַת טוֹב וְרָע וְעַתָּה פָּן־יִשְׁלַח יָדוֹ וְלָקַח גַּם מִעֵץ הַחַיִּים וְאָכַל וְחָי לְעֹלָם

Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, **lest he put out** his hand and **take** also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.” (Gen 3:22)

3. Relationships involving an imperative as the governing verb. An imperative may serve as a governing verb when it is placed in sequence with a perfect, an imperfect, or another imperative. When an imperative functions as the governing verb, the verb that follows sometimes expresses the notion of purpose or result.

- a. *Imperative + Perfect Sequence*. The perfect in this coordinate relationship must be translated as an imperative.

קח לך מגלת ספר וכתב עליה את כהדברים אשר דברתי אליך על ישראל ועל יהודה ועל כל הגוים
מיום דברתי אליך מימי יאשיהו ועד היום הזה

Take a scroll of a book **and write** on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel, against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah even to this day. (Jer. 36:2)

- b. *Imperative + Imperfect Sequence*. The imperfect in coordinate relationship with an imperative sometimes expresses purpose or result.

ויתפלל אלישע ויאמר יהוה פקח-נא את-עיניו ויראה ויפקח והן את-עני הנער וירא והנה החר מלא
סוסים ורכב אש סביבת אלישע

And Elisha prayed, and said, “LORD, I pray, **open** his eyes that **he may see**.” The the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. (2 Kings 6:17)

- c. *Imperative + Imperative Sequence*. The second imperative in this sequence often expresses purpose or result.

סור מרע ועשה טוב בקש שלום ורדפהו

Depart from evil **and do** good; seek peace and pursue it. (Ps. 34:15; Eng. 34:14)

4. *Infinitive Absolute + Perfect Sequence*. The infinitive absolute may be used with the force of an imperative. In this case, the perfect is placed in sequence with the infinitive absolute and the perfect is translated as an imperative.

הלך ודבר אל-דוד

Go and say to David... (2 Sam. 24:12a)

5. *Participle + Perfect Sequence*. The participle is often used to describe an impending action, where something is destined to take place in the near future. This construction is most notably used with the particle הנה “behold!”

כי אנכי מת בארץ הזאת אינני עבר את-הירדן ואתם עברים וירשתם את-הארץ הטובה הזאת

But I must die in this land, I must not cross over the Jordan; but **you shall cross and possess** that good land. (Deut. 4:22)

הנני שלח מלאכי ופנה-דרך לפני

Behold, I send My messenger, **and he will prepare** the way before Me. (Mal. 3:1a)

Syntax of the Subject

1. The verb is normally followed by its subject (if the subject is specified).

וַיִּשְׁכֵּן כְּבוֹד-יְהוָה עַל-הַר סִינַי וַיִּכְסְפוּ הָעָנָן שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים וַיִּקְרָא אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מֵתוֹךְ הָעָנָן
Now **the glory of Yahweh** dwelt upon Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. (Ex. 24:16)

2. The subject may come before the verb in order to emphasize the subject.

יְהוָה יִמְלֹךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד
Yahweh will reign forever and ever. (Ex. 15:18)

Syntax of the Object

1. The indirect object is the person or thing that is indirectly affected by the action of the verb. It is usually marked with either the prepositional prefixes לְ (to, for) or אֶל- (to, for) and precedes or follows the direct object.

יָדַעְתִּי כִּי-נָתַן יְהוָה לָכֶם אֶת-הָאָרֶץ
I know that Yahweh has given **to you** the land (Josh. 2:9)

2. A direct object will frequently stand after the verb or its subject. Definite direct objects may be marked by the sign of the direct object אֵת or אֶת.

בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ
God created **the heavens and the earth** (Gen. 1:1)

3. The verb may precede the object in order to emphasize the object.

אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ תִירָא
The LORD your God you shall fear. (Deut. 10:20)

Disjunctive Vav

A disjunctive vav is prefixed to a non-verbal word and serves to introduce some kind of break in the narrative. This construction can be divided into four classes.

1. *Parenthetical*. The disjunctive clause interrupts the narrative in order to provide an explanation that is important for understanding the narrative.

וְהֵם לֹא יָדְעוּ כִּי שָׁמַע יוֹסֵף כִּי הִמְלִיץ בֵּינֵהֶם

Now they did not know that Jossph was understanding them because there was an interpreter between them (Gen. 42:23). (The disjunctive vav וְהֵם introduces a parenthetical comment).

2. *Circumstantial*. The disjunctive clause introduces or identifies circumstantial information that relates to the main action of the narrative.

וַיְהִי כַּחֲסִיּוֹם הַהוּא וַיָּבֹא הַבֵּיתָה לַעֲשׂוֹת מְלָאכְתּוֹ וְאִין אִישׁ מֵאֲנָשֵׁי הַבַּיִת שָׁם בַּבַּיִת

And one day, he went into the house to do his work and none of the household servants were there in the house (Gen. 39:11). (The disjunctive vav אִין introduces a circumstantial comment).

3. *Contrastive*. The contrastive clause is introduced by the disjunctive vav and serves to contrast one idea with another.

וַיִּשַׁע יְהוָה אֶל-הָבֶל וְאֶל-מִנְחָתוֹ וְאֶל-קַיִן וְאֶל-מִנְחָתוֹ לֹא שָׁעָה

The Lord looked favorably on Abel and his offering but on Cain and his offering he did not look favorably (Gen. 4:4). (The disjunctive vav וְאֶל-קַיִן contrasts the Lord's response to the two men and their offerings³.)

4. *Introductory*. A disjunctive vav may be used to introduce a new subject or theme.

וַהֲנִקְשׁ הָיָה עָרוֹם מִכָּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the creatures that the Lord God had made (Gen. 3:1).

³ Gary Pratico & Miles Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), p. 282

Conditional Sentences

Hebrew conditional sentences can be identified by the use of the conditionals **אם**, **כי**, **הן** or **אשר** as the *protasis* followed by a perfect, imperfect or participle. The conditional's *apodosis* will often begin with the conjunction **ו**. Drs. Pratico and Van Pelt give the following example from Judges 4:8⁴,

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ בָּרַק אִם-תֵּלְכִי עִמִּי וְהִלַּכְתִּי וְאִם-לֹא תֵלְכִי עִמִּי לֹא אֵלֶיךָ

Barak said to her, “*if* you will go with me, *then* I will go; but *if* you will not go with me, (*then*) I will not go” (Judges 4:8)

Condition (Protasis)		Consequence (Apodosis)
אִם-תֵּלְכִי עִמִּי		וְהִלַּכְתִּי
“if (אם) you will go”		“then I will go”
וְאִם-לֹא תֵלְכִי עִמִּי		לֹא אֵלֶיךָ
“but if (אם) you will not go”		“(then) I will not go”

- a. A Hebrew conditional sentence may not possess any identifiers.

וְעוֹב אֶת-אָבִיו וּמָת

If he leaves his father, then he will die (Gen. 44:22)

Adverbs

Adverbs modify the verb. They further describe, limit or qualify the verb, adjective, or another adverb.

1. Adverbs of Time

עַתָּה	now	טָרָם	before, not yet
אָז	then, at that time		

2. Adverbs of Place

פֹּה	here	שָׁם	there
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⁴ Gary Pratico & Miles Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), p. 280

הִנֵּה here

חוּץ outside

3. *Adverbs of Degree*

מְאֹד very
עוֹד again

תָּמִיד continually

4. *Adverbs of Manner*

יַחְדָּו together

פְּתָאֵם suddenly

Practice

- I. Memorize the vocabulary